



# Suggestion 11

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4 pages

**SUBMISSION TO THE REDISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE:**  
**Proposal to rename the electoral district of *La Trobe***  
**to the electoral district of *Flack***

***To members of the committee, staff, and fellow observers.***



The electoral district of La Trobe is a federal electoral district located in Victoria's south-East stretching from Berwick and Beaconsfield to Nar Nar Goon.

The electoral district of La Trobe was first formed and contested in 1949, located far greater in towards Melbourne than we see it today. La Trobe was first represented by Richard Baron Casey, a distinguished AIF lieutenant who served in Gallipoli who not only had previously served as treasurer under the Lyons and Page governments whilst the member for Corio, as well as the Governor of Bengal among other positions, but who would also go on to be both a member of the British House of Lords, and Australia's 16<sup>th</sup> Governor General. The neighboring electoral district of Casey is subsequently named after him.

Ever since Casey, La Trobe has been represented by 9 MPs, and, at time of writing, is currently represented by the Hon. Jason Wood. La Trobe has rapidly expanded ever since its creation, and the territory which La Trobe now encompasses now often denoted as some of the most rapidly expanding and developing regions in the country. In 2022, the [Cardinia Shire](#) was a recipient of the Growing Suburbs Fund, and in 2023, the [City of Casey](#) was marked as the 8<sup>th</sup> fastest growing municipality in Australia, both regional authorities either partly or near-exclusively residing within the boundaries of the La Trobe electoral district.

As a developing region, La Trobe will undoubtedly become the electoral district called home by an increasingly greater number of Australians in the coming years. Undoubtedly, La Trobe's residents will make the seat represent the community through who they elect to represent them in Parliament, and yet the seat itself may feel isolated and unrepresentative of the La Trobe community as a whole.

This is due to the name of the electoral district itself, La Trobe. As a member of the La Trobe electoral district myself, I certainly have questions as to how much the name of La Trobe

represents this rapidly-expanding and incredibly diverse community, as the individual our seat is named after lacks any real connection to the region that the electoral district of La Trobe comprises of.

As such, after over 70 years since it was first contested, it could potentially be time to finally update and rename the electoral district of La Trobe.

But who is the electoral district named after?

The electoral district of La Trobe is named after Victoria's first Lieutenant-Governor, **Charles La Trobe**. He is often credited with securing Victoria's independence from New South Wales while serving as the Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, that which would go on to become Victoria.



Born in 1801, La Trobe's journey to Victoria was long, born in England, spending time in Switzerland, New Orleans, Mexico and even the West Indies before he would eventually arrive in the New South Wales colony. In 1839, La Trobe eventually found himself appointed as Superintendent of the Port Phillip District. During his time as Superintendent, La Trobe began and furthered the development of the rapidly expanding city of Melbourne, and whilst he was not an open campaigner for independence of the Port Phillip District, the groundworks layed by La Trobe certainly began to peel away on the district's dependency of New South Wales.

Upon the colony's separation in 1851, La Trobe would be appointed the inaugural Lieutenant-Governor of what now became the colony of Victoria. However, it was here where La Trobe's inexperience had got the better of him, and, by his own admission, he felt as if he were not up to the task. This only reinforced itself in La Trobe's management of the early days of the Victorian Gold Rush. The massive inpour of persons attempting to dig for gold led La Trobe to enforce what would commonly be referred to as "Gold Licenses", an extremely high weekly fee that all those digging for gold would have to pay, regardless of if they found gold or not. This decision was extremely unpopular and would eventually go on to spark the well-known Eureka Rebellion under his successor, Charles Hotham.

La Trobe tendered his resignation in December of 1852.

To spell it clearly, it must be asked, first of all, why the electoral district of La Trobe is named after our founding Lieutenant-Governor, and secondly, if such a name is appropriate to the area? Despite his historical significance, Lieutenant-Governor La Trobe has no relevance or connection to the area that the seat named after him comprises of. And, for one of the country's fastest growing areas, surely there must be a better name, a name with its roots planted firmly in the community, that can be used to represent the La Trobe electorate.

Despite the many faults in his leadership, this submission is not to say that we haven't many thanks owing to La Trobe for his service in the development of us as a colony and an eventual state. Renaming the electoral district of La Trobe is not in any way an attempt at erasing or revising history, as our founding Lieutenant-Governor will continue to be honored for his service in the formation of Victoria all the same through other means. Rather, by proposing a renaming of the La Trobe electoral district, it is acknowledging that our founding Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe has zero real connection, and thereby zero fundamental claim, to the region of which the seat named in his honor is comprised of, and that a name more directly tied to the community would far better serve this purpose.

However, if not for anything else, there exists a person directly connected to the heart of the La Trobe region who would far better suit the area comprising the electoral district, and is just as deserving of the honor of being immortalized with an electoral district named after him for his impactful service, not just to Victoria like Charles La Trobe, but to Australia as a whole.



**Edwin Flack.**

Edwin Flack, also known as 'Teddy', and later, 'the Lion of Athens', served our nation on the world stage as Australia's first Olympic athlete.

Born in 1873, Edwin Flack and his family immigrated to Australia when he was but 5-years-old. Upon arrival, he and his family settled in Berwick, one of the main beating hearts of the modern La Trobe electoral district, which he considered to be his hometown for his entire life.

Throughout his early years, Flack competed as a long-distance runner, and found great success in amateur Victorian sporting events, placing third in the inaugural Victorian 10-mile cross country championship. Flack's unique athletic capabilities would not be showcased purely in Victoria however, competing in the 1893 Australasian Athletics Championships, winning the mile event.

During his time returned in London to receive professional training as an accountant, his professional occupation, Flack joined the London Athletics Club with the intention of seeking a position in the inaugural 1896 Olympic Games in Athens. He was successful in this endeavour, and did compete as an "Australian" despite the fact that no Australian Olympic Team had been sent to compete, or that Australia as a nation had yet to even formally federate.

However, Flack was an immediate star of the Athens Olympics, and set the stage for Australian Olympic athletes to come. Flack's presence at the Athens Olympics was not unfruitful, attaining Australia's first ever gold medal in the inaugural 800 metre run, and beat out American favourite Arthur Blake in the 1500 metre run by 5 metres to secure a second gold medal. He further attained a bronze medal in doubles tennis as part of a mixed team with his British friend George Stuart Robert.

Despite not belonging to any formal team, Flack was viewed incredibly highly throughout the entirety of the Athens Olympics, and, in a famous letter to his family, noted that “*They tell me I have become the “Lion of Athens”. I could not go down the street without having a small crowd of people following me on all sides.*”

Despite the fact that he retired from competing in athletics after the Athens Olympics, he joined the Australian Olympic Committee upon federation, and was Australia’s first delegate to the congress of the International Olympic Committee.

While he died in 1935 during an operation for his heart problems, his ashes then buried in his hometown of Berwick, he was posthumously inducted into the Sports Australia Hall of Fame in 1985, followed by the Athletics Australia Hall of Fame in 2000, of which the Edwin Flack Award is named in his honour. His legacy to Australia is commemorated frequently within Berwick, such as with the Edwin Flack Reserve, and a memorial statue of Flack located in Berwick’s High Street.



**Nowhere else in Australia can say that they were home to our nation’s first Olympic athlete.** It is a unique privilege that the La Trobe electoral district alone has the pride and honour of holding. Therefore, I humbly urge all those who may view this proposal to understand that renaming **the electoral district of La Trobe** to **the electoral district of Flack** is not only regionally appropriate to the area encompassing the electoral district, far more regionally appropriate than Lieutenant-Governor Charles La Trobe at least, but also serves as a fitting recognition and honouring of Edwin Flack’s service to Australia.



***Hoping in solidarity.***

**Declan Coleman.**

**Submitted: 08/11/2023.**